

Interagency Wildfire Management Team
Meeting Notes
January 15, 2003

Note: The following is an excerpt from the December 2002 information packet provided by the Climate Assessment for the Southwest project (CLIMAS), located at the Institute for the Study of Planet Earth, University of Arizona. El Niño conditions continue to strengthen during the past month. Seasonal climate forecasts indicate fairly high confidence in increased probabilities of above-average precipitation across most of Arizona and New Mexico through the winter months. Long-term drought is still a major concern for the Southwest. For more information, see <http://www.ispe.arizona.edu/climas/forecasts.html>

Diana Webb (Office of the Associate Director for Operations, LANL) discussed some of the recent management changes at LANL. Diana and the IWMT concluded that the importance of wildfire issues should not be diminished during this time of transition. Diana also distributed a letter and an action plan from the Secretary of Energy, Spencer Abraham recommending five actions to improve fire safety across the DOE complex.

Robbie Stibbard (Los Alamos County Fire Department) emphasized that the drought is continuing and the 2003 fire season will require close attention.

Fran Talley (Public Affairs Office, LANL) announced that the public wildfire meeting for 2003 will be held in the Pueblo Gym on April 18. Details of the agenda were discussed.

Dean Clark (Bandelier National Monument) and Gene Darling (Emergency Management and Response, LANL) are serving as co-chairs of the Santa Fe Zone Board for northern New Mexico. The most recent Zone Board meeting was last Friday. At the meeting, preparation for the 2003 fire season, including the completion of as much fire hazard reduction progress as possible before the fire season begins, was emphasized. Issues related to the potential shortage of air tankers during 2003 were also discussed.

Darroll Abeyta (Española Ranger District, Santa Fe National Forest) reported that Phil Neff, the Fire Management Officer for the Jemez Ranger District, has retired. Paul Womack is the acting FMO for the District. In addition, the Santa Fe National Forest is continuing to support the Los Alamos County in their fire hazard reduction efforts.

Randy Balice (Ecology Group, LANL) has been evaluating climate data collected by the LANL weather monitoring system. Precipitation data collected at the TA-54 and TA-49 weather stations indicate that moisture received during 2001 and 2002, about 10 inches per year, was approximately 40 percent less than the average received during the previous decade, about 15 inches per year.

Susan DiMauro (Los Alamos County Defensible Space Project) reported via an email that the County Defensible Space Project has begun. This project, which is under the direction of the County Fire Department, is designed to help protect the community from wildfires. For more information contact Susan at 505-661-9769.

Paul White and Jim Toevs (NIS-7, LANL) are serving as LANL hosts for a delegation from Russia during January 27 through January 31. The delegation, which will gain from our local experiences in fire hazard reduction, will consist of 12-13 experts from the closed nuclear cities of Sarov (Arzamas-16) and Snezhinsk (Chelyabinsk-70).

The next IWMT meeting will be at 9:30 AM on Wednesday, January 29, at TA-21, Building 210 in the Conference Room (142). The IWMT meets every other week and these meetings are open to the public. Contact Randy Balice (balice@lanl.gov, 665-1270) for further information, or to get on the distribution list for these meeting notes.